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567 158 or threat seemed to stir him. They are exceedingly superstitious, too, and are frequently visited by a familiar spirit, who takes complete possession of the individual. The Arabs on the Pirate Coast are not especially superstitious. They are Sunni Mohammedans, and that sort of faith does not readily lend itself to superstition. However, when one of these negro slaves starts up as if suddenly crazed, and runs around shouting and gesticulating and talking earnestly in a changed voice as if a new personality had possessed him, even the hard Arab masters are a good deal awed and hesitate to inflict the punishment they had planned. These visitations may come at the most opportune times, and it takes more hardihood than the Arab usually possesses to disregard such a warning. I have had such a slave jump suddenly from the operating table when all preparations were complete and I had the knife in my hand to begin an operation for the removal of a tumor from his neck. The operation was to be done under local anesthesia, so the patient was fully conscious. We were thankful that he did not wait till ten minutes later when the operation would have been well under way. These slaves are not shamming in any ordinary sense. They thoroughly believe in the genuineness of such manifestations. They do not thus escape every whipping, but these visitations undoubtedly do protect them from a certain number of terrible punishments at the hands of their Arab masters.

505 644 In these diving communities the actual control even of the civil powers rests in the hands of the diving captains and the pearl merchants. The town of Ras el Kheima has a number of divers who regularly dive in boats the captains of which live in Dibai and Sharja. During one winter war of a small sort broke out between

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the Sheikh of Ras el Kheima and some of the inland tribes of that district, and this fighting was pushed quite vigorously, the city being more or less in a state of siege. It was not difficult to hold the port itself against attack, but as the fighting continued, the diving season came on. The merchants of Sharja and Dibai then sent representatives to settle the matter, for their divers were being held in the city for its defense and had not reported for diving. The Sheikh was far from willing to make peace, but eventually the pressure of these men of money was too much for him, and he was compelled to settle with the tribesmen so his subjects could go out and work for the men whose debtors they were.

Conditions in a diving community are not pleasant to see. They seem the more pitiful because they are so unnecessary. Why should not any dozen men who are out of debt, or a dozen beginners, club together, borrow the capital for the season's supplies, or better, save their money for a season or two and then have the capital sufficient for the enterprise? One-half of an ordinary year's profits would probably meet all expenses and another half season's profits would buy the boat that carries the men. The pearl banks are free, the markets are free. It would be easy to purchase supplies at the same price that every one else pays. The proceeds of such a group would be subject to the same element of chance as every pearl diver's but in any case should be at least twice those they receive at present, inasmuch as the captain's and the pearl merchant's extortions would be avoided. Any dozen divers might do it. The skill required is most moderate and the necessary capital within easy reach.

As a matter of fact the experiment is occasionally tried, but I never knew it to last through more than one